773 the slow evolution of consciousness (concept of pain), judgment (concept of responsibility and guilt), will (concept of the creative effort and work), all of which develop in man with the advent of suffering
[761] and death. Death is felt to be an accident in the working out of the universal order, an accident compensated for in part by the conservation of spiritual principles and their reincarnation in accordance with the fundamental belief in the eternal resurrection of all things. The myth describes the first ritual, the rejuvenation, which ceases with the advent of death but is replaced by blood sacrifice which today is still the central practice of the rites (1).

1. Wherever possible the writer has avoided discussion of the details of myths so as not to distract the reader from the general line of the Bambara world view. But the scholar, in attempting to better understand the collective psychological processes of this people, may profitably study the numerous variant themes found among them.

The myths described below are the framework of the present-day Bambara religion and of the general cults to Pemba and Faro maintained by the people.

Preliminaries of Creation

1. The glã̃ glã̃ zɔ́

772 The Bambara creation myths imply a philosophy of being and of the universe developed from the void, from nothing, fu (2).

[802] 2. This concept is expressed by a sign with the same name which can also be translated by "nothingness" or "zero" and is a part of the Bambara number system. See Fig. 1, No. 11. For a discussion of this sign denoting the continuity and proliferation of creation, see p. 102.

772 This knowledge, derived from the Kéita of Mandé, is called glã̃ glã̃ zo and describes the timeless and primordial state that preceded the stages of creation. The word glã̃ which indicates the original void, connotes at the same time the ideas of movement, awakening, re-awakening, and resurrection; glã̃ is the principle of the inner universal movement of the cosmos and all that composes it. On the other hand, the term implies the idea that creation is continuous /3/ from the moment of its beginning and perpetually maintained in all things as well as in the universe taken as a whole (1).

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1. The word glã̃ belongs to the ancient language. The Bambara term closest to it in meaning is kununi, which means "reawakening, resurrection." Glã̃ is the principle of the eternal resurrection of all things.

Glã̃, "full of its own emptiness and its emptiness full of itself," extended its power everywhere. It sounded "a voice of emptiness" which brought into being its double, dya; glã̃ became two, thus indicating the primordial character of duality, the existential principle (2). The

2. It is said: glã̃ ye lankolo nye, lankolo nye glã̃ ye, glã̃ ye a yere ke lankolo fla ye, lankolo fla ye a yere ke glã̃ ye; "glã̃ is the emptiness, emptiness is glã̃, glã̃ made itself into two emptinesses, two emptinesses made themselves into glã̃ itself."

two gave forth a damp substance, zo zumale, "cold rust," which came out as invisible liquid vapor and formed hard shiny substances (3).

3. glã̃ ye koloya a la ka kr zo ye, boli tumbi kẹ šiši ye bali ye, ka kẹ dyi sumalè ye, ka kẹ zo yele gele ye; "glã̃ made a substance which was rust come out of itself; this emission was invisible smoke which then became cold water, the latter becoming a hard and shiny rust." The informant translated the word zo as "rust."

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And while comparing this matter to the product of oxidation in a metal, once it is released, he describes it as a crystal.

When all was filled with these frozen substances, glã emitted a power, zo ñami, which, rising and descending within itself, produced an inner breath called fyẽ tasuma, "fire of wind." The two glã crossed this vast content and the fire melted the substances (1). At the time

1. "The two glã arose and melted away the voice of glã; creation spoke with the voice of glã"; (glã flã wululila ke, glã kã yeke, dali ye glã kã fo).

of this first fusion "the vast glã gave a place to all things secretly and invisibly" (2).

2. kono glã ye sikiyoro di few be ma, gundo ni blika la. The word "thing," a literal translation of fẽ, is used here in its most general sense.

The two glã then immobilized themselves, "gathering their energy into themselves," and, once more, everything became fixed and frozen. Then, a second time, they melted the substances, as though destroying the preliminary form in order to make another. These movements, called glã glã, bear witness to the very essence of glã which is the eternal resurrection of all things, and the repetition of the word expresses duality, the basis of creation. At the time of these two successive fusions, the glã fixed "four points," one at the moment of the first melting and the other three in the course of the second, all of which were placed in a state of "immobile action" (3).

3. The informant compares this stage of creation to a hand holding a pencil, the tip of which rests on a sheet of paper. The hand is poised as if to write, but is immobilized. The four points anticipate the cardinal points, beginning with the east (see p. 223).

772 Then glã released within itself a shuttling motion /4/, the repercussions of which gave the elements of the potential universe a soul. This movement also had the effect of situating the elements and of keeping them in place through the force of attraction (mana): "glã has stirred up the elements, they have taken their places, and heat has kept them in place" (1).

1. glã ye few yereyere, u nye, u sikiyoro mine, funteni yu mana. The informant compares this horizontal movement to one which might be applied to a surface pitted with cup-like depressions; the objects of creation, at first strewn about in disorder, would, under the effect of this shuttling movement, each place itself in a hole. Mana is translated as "attraction," or "agglutination," when it is used as a noun. It can also mean "to shed" and may designate the product of the shedding the exuvia; mana is thus a synonym of folo.

At the same time, the contact established between the two glã produced a kind of explosion out of which was ejected "a hard and powerful substance" which vibrated as it descended. Out of this vibration came, one by one, the signs which, attracted by the objects (as yet uncreated but about to be created) to which they gave name, placed themselves on the objects. Thus, each thing acquired its sign and its word, and "obeying the movement of glã," each began to vibrate feebly within itself and in its assigned place.

When all things were thus assigned their places and potentially designated, another element detached itself from glã and placed itself on the objects in order to take cognizance of them: this was "man's foot" (or "the grain of the foot"), a symbol of human consciousness. As this element gained knowledge, it communicated this knowledge to all things which then became conscious of themselves. Thus, all things were designated and named silently before they came into existence, and were called into being by their names and their signs. But they did not know themselves as such except in man's consciousness, the "grain" or principle of the universe.

772 Then all things assembled and began to rumble in order to complete the creation of the universe. The glã remained within themselves and delegated to zo the responsibility of liberating the designated and animated objects which they contained and of which they had created the essence. Zo took possession of them and joined their elements into a huge ball, kuru, called yo yebali, "invisible yo": zo gave yo the principle of the seed and endowed it with attraction and power (1).

1. zo ye kise masa di yo ma, ka samani masa bla la, ka mineni masa bla a la.

Yo was the spirit, more exactly "the thought and action," that was to work out the creation, using the "signed objects" determined by glã.

772 /5/ The glã glã zo is represented by three engravings on wood.
532 The first, glã kele, represents the two glã in the shape of two spirals in opposite directions and with connected points of origin; below this is engraved "the object with four arms" from which issued the signs (2). These signs, 226 in number, are barely sketched out, showing

[824] 2. Today this object is represented by a twig of Acacia albida, called "the wood that separates the signs," ti kla dyiri. Its bark is removed in such a way as to outline the multiplication sign enclosed in an oval representing the world.

that "the creation of glã takes place in the invisible, the unknown, the unrealized." The second, glã dya, is composed of 226 horizontal or vertical lines, the counterparts or "witnesses" of words. The third, glã zo, is an oval divided into seven compartments (a square in the middle and two times three lateral sections) in which the symbolic representations are clearly engraved. In the middle of the central square, there is an oval containing six signs which represent simultaneously "the egg of the world and yo, the creating voice."

772 2. The yo

The creation of the perceptible universe beginning with yo is conceived of as a progression in "thinking," tasi (3). This progression,

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3. From ta (to do, in the ancient language) and si (to act). The Bambara freely translate tasi as "spirit of nothing" and give this stage, originating in nothingness and preceding creation, the name of tasi dyẽ, "world of the spirit of nothing."

called oryo or oyo, is broken down into three stages: yo, the inner word, invisible spirit and inaudible voice, potentially containing all creation: o the transition from the inaudible to the audible; [801] yereyereli, the creative vibration (4). The progression is represented

4. The name oyo, given to this system, is a composite of o and yo, and when pronounced reverses the chronological order. This anomaly is recognized by the Bambara who explain it by the fact that yo, designating an inaudible voice, cannot be pronounced before o which designates a perceptible noise. Thus, in reversing the chronological order, yo "remains in the secret of o" which is in accord with its nature.

by seven signs, 7 being the symbolic number of man (homo) "seed of the world." Indeed, this numeral is the sum of 3 (male symbol) and 4 (female symbol). The couple they form is itself the symbol of duality, the fundamental law of creation, since each human being is both male and female in body and spirit (5).

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5. The number 3 represents the penis and two testicles of the male body; the number 4 the four labia of the female body. On the other hand, man and woman are each endowed with two twin souls of different sexes; the soul of sex, opposite to that of its bearer, has its seat in the foreskin or the clitoris until the operation of circumcision or excision is performed. For further discussion of the duality of man and his

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person, see G. Dieterlen, La Personne chez les Bambara /The individual among the Bambara/ and infra, Ch. 3, The Person.

772 It is said that yo, the inner secret voice, "is born of itself, is known by itself, and comes out from itself /6/, out of the nothing which is itself" (1). Out of yo there will come only things that are themselves

1. yo na na a yere la, bwora a yere la, dona a yere la, a be fu la min ya yere ye.

and that will be nothing other than yo. Each thing, being yo, proceeds like yo, only from itself. Hence, man is nothing other than himself, since he is a creation of yo and since yo's creations are by itself. Thus, there is nothing in the world besides oneself, since the person is yo, and yo is entirely contained in the person. As a result, each being is directly descended from yo with no intermediary; it is yo and exists only because it wills it. That is to say, man, the image of yo, alone has the will, alone has the capacity to bring forth action or creation, since these can be nothing but himself. "Who then," say the initiates, " can know himself, make himself known and manifest himself, other than through himself? Who then can manifest anything but himself?"

But yo, being at the origin of the inaudible and invisible things that are itself, is also in the unknown, hence in nothingness. And consequently, the same is true of man who is nothingness and can act only on the nothingness of himself.

Thus, yo, insofar as it was mind, was free in its ability to decide and to use its creative will. Its work, in nothingness, consisted in shedding, "for it was the continuous shedding of the world." When it
772 manifested itself by rotating on itself, it went five times to the four
801 "angles of its thought," seleke miri, once to the "sky of its thought," sã miri, once to the "earth of its thought," dugukolo miri, thus communicating its power to them (2). The realization of this universe,

2. On the meaning of the number 5, see p. 25. Yo has endowed the "angles," corresponding to the "cardinal angles" in the completed universe, with its greatest

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strength for there the Bambara place the poles of attraction which, in the universe, uphold all bodies. It is said: "All bodies accept the force of attraction of the four angles," fari be bi sõ seleke nuni mana barika la.

which determined "the space of yo in its own thought," is expressed by the number 22: "yo, darkness of creation, in the depth of the secret space of night, master of the foundation of the 22 rotations, great bearer of vibration, great builder of the marrow of bones (1).

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1. yo dali dyibi, ɲu kene gundo tyema, munumunu mu tani fla siki ba, yere done ba, kolow nye kono dlaba, kono being the ancient term for marrow.

This prayer is recited in honor of yo when a woman's pregnancy is first noticed; it is also recited at eclipses of the sun.

These 22 spirals stirred up all that yo contained in spirit; nugu, "entrails, intestines," which carried all things and man within itself; yaã, "seed of the air," which placed the voids in all /7/ parts of space"; fayã, "seed of the wind"; sani, "seed of water"; yerẽ, "seed of fire"; yelẽgu, "seed of earthly matter" (2). The rotations of yo

2. fayã, sani, yerẽ (in ancient language), and yelẽgu were at the origin of the four elements, air, water, fire and earth, all of which did not yet exist but were to appear later.

The seven elements composing yo are represented by signs, reproduced in Figure 1 (1 to 7).

put them in order and kept them under the force of attraction (mana). In other words, carried away by this whirlwind, both magnetic and creative, the elements became organized, one in relation to the other; in this way the 22 terms of the universe, as thought out by yo, were determined; these terms are also the 22 periods of its thought:

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1. origin of the west, klebi dyu
2. origin of the east, koro dyu
3. origin of the north, baba dyu
4. origin of the south, bani dyu
5. the sky from above, sã̀ kaba

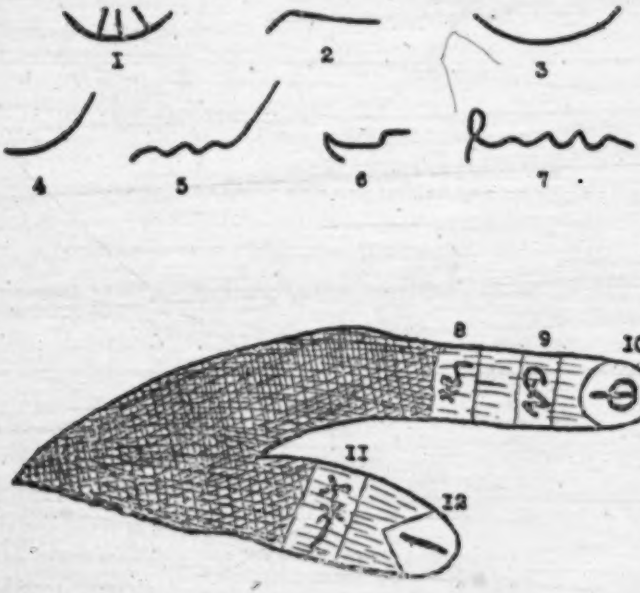

Fig. 1.—Bambara signs. From 1 to 7, signs of yo. From 8 to 12, signs of the king's thumb and index finger, representing the actual world and the future world (drawings by an informant).

6. secret space, tyema gundo
7. earth, dugu
8. center of the earth, kotye dugu
9. eye of the earth, dugu nye
10. mouth of the earth, dugu da (1)

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1. The earth breathes through orifices called "mouths."

11. northwest, seleke se /8/ (literally: foot of the angle)

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12. southwest, seleke bolo (literally: hand of the angle)
13. northeast, seleke (angle)
14. southeast, seleke (angle)
15. sun, kle
16. moon, kalo
17. male star, dolo ke
18. female star, dolo muso
19. mouth or mother of the star, dolo da or dolo ba
20. grain of rain, sã kise
21. secret rain, sã gundo
22. damp rain, sã suma (1).

1. It is said of these times: "yo says only yo above, one should imitate this; the world has moved to the west, the east, the north, the south, " yo bi yo fo sana, ladeke ka kãka kẹ o la, giri kera wa la, ni flaye la, ni kaye la, ni noro la. The terms giri, wa, flaye, kaye, noro belong to the ancient language.

While whirling from the "angles" to the cardinal sides, yo thought out four worlds (2):

2. The four worlds are represented by a drawing made up of four concentric quadrangular figures, observed by the informant in the village of Kéré in Mandé. The Bambara conceive of space as a square with cardinal angles and sides (see p. 55 , Fig. 3).

The first, dyẽ mana, "the shedding of the world, " belongs to the time when yo "circulated within himself" in nothingness, and of which it is said: "yo was the shedding of the world; he made himself shed"(3).

3. yo tunye dyẽ mana ye, o tumbi mana a yere la.

The following world, dyẽ gale, "the first world, " is the universe about to be realized, the actual world, and it is said that its symbol

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is 3: "The foundation of the first world was given to all things by yo, these things were constructed at 3." (1) In order to realize the world,

> 1. dyɛ̃ gale sikityoko dira fama yo fɛ
> few ma, o few ye dlali ke saba la.

yo had to use intermediaries which he created as such, but which were responsible for imperfection since the harmony of all things would have required that creation be directly willed and engendered by yo himself. The first constructed universe is thus 3: yo is 1, the intermediary is 2, the world itself is 3. As a result the whole creation is not equal to yo, for its perfection would have expressed itself by 2, that is to say by yo and the world with no intermediary (2).

> 2. This idea would seem to contradict the principle of yo's identity with all creation. It should be taken to mean that the total work of creation also includes imperfection. The cause of this imperfection is precisely the presence of intermediaries created, so to speak, with this purpose in mind.

On the other hand, it is said that the actualized universe was constructed and perceived at 3, known at 4. When yo decided to create, in period one, nothing could know it, since it alone moved in the nothingness in which it placed its energies. When these energies united, they formed a new unity which, added to yo, made 2, that is to say the period two which was as yet unknown. These energies grew slowly heavier while "resisting in attraction," that is, ordering themselves. This was /9/ period three and things became perceptible. But not until period four did they become clearly known, that is, man became conscious of them. As a result, masculinity (symbol 3) in nature is considered the original stimulus in determining fertility. The fulfillment of fertility and the complete knowledge of it can only be accomplished through femininity (symbol 4).

But yo, being perfect, wanted perfection, and in attempting to achieve it, wished to reach 5. For this purpose, he went beyond universe 3 and reached 4. Since numbers were already the symbol of

T12 801 things and (so to speak) the things themselves, 4, representing femininity, could not create by itself, for 4 does not exist in 3, symbol of masculinity. And in the universe as thought out by yo, nothing can be engendered without the help of complementaries or twins, whose prototype is the couple: masculinity-femininity.

World 4 is called dyẽ bana, "the refused world," for, in the face of difficulty, yo kept that creation within itself; it remains there as a potential and will return into the world called dyẽ nata, "the world to come," in which, reaching 5, yo will achieve a universe not in 3, like the actual one, but in 2 (yo and the world), without an intermediary. Hence its perfection, for it will be equal to its creator. This universe will be created in the opposite direction of the preceding one in the following order: south, north, east, and west. It will be established by the "great voice of one word" and characterized by the transformation of beings, a new distribution, the absence of error, a close contact with the essence of things, and perfect knowledge. For it is said: "In the world to come, all words will be changed. Solidity was not achieved in this creation, but union will be accomplished in the solidity of one word. Yo's course, yo's work, yo's sleep will penetrate every being. The second world is a new world, the world of one word" (1).

1. Dyẽ nata la, kumaw be bi yelema; sikityoko ma kle dali ko la fara ñugã na kẹ kuma dyotyoko kele nye; yo boli, yo bara, yo suna, bi dõ ma be la; dyẽ fla ye dyẽ kura ye, dyẽ kura ye kuma kele nye.

This text is sometimes recited in the course of talks which follow religious ceremonies, and at times when the movements of creation are discussed. Many details of rituals and games indicate this preoccupation with a second universe. See Fig. 1, p. 22 and Fig. 4, p. 56.

Because yo has only constructed the first universe, men understand only half of its thought, the other half to be realized in the "second world."

772 After having thought out the universe and rotated upon itself to
80| create the universe, yo "divided and distributed its Word." It placed three times 22 voices /10/ in o, which then entrusted one time 22 voices to yereyereli, out of which the finally conceived universe was to come forth. This deposit in o is none other than the change of the inaudible voice, yo, into an audible voice. When that voice began to sound outside of yo, still invisible and secret, the latter stopped moving and remained motionless within itself: o, in its sound, is the emissary of yo. And in that voice all things necessary to the building of the universe were proposed; all these things also potentially rumbled across the "angles of the world." When this primary movement reached its heighth, the yereyereli, the vibration, issued from it, and when the vibration existed and was shed, o stopped rumbling but was itself the spirit of movement: it is said: "yere came forth from o, o was its foundation" (1).

1. yere bwora o la, o kera siki kele nye a ko.

772 Yo being the immense and inaudible voice, o became the rumbling voice; finally yereyereli, the high-sounding vibration, formed the rays of light in space. The whole of the infinite trembled, shone, and resounded. After the yereyereli had filled space with movement, light, and sound, it ask o for its power and became "pregnant," bearing all it wanted and had to create: "The vibration had the power of attraction, the creator was secretly within it" (2). The present universe issued from the vibration, provoking "astonishment," koni, a term used to designate both the yereyereli and the creative principle it contained (3).

2. Yereyereli tunye mana ma ye, daliba tumbi a kono gundo la.
The Bambara imagined that the light and sound of this vibration were such that they were intolerable to vision and hearing; however, even though man cannot perceive the vibration, it exists nonetheless; "the egg of the world continues its vibration in sound and light."

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3. On koni, see S. de Canay, Notes sur la théodicée bambara, pp. 188ff.

Creation of the Universe

772 773 At the center of yereyereli was the spirit, miri, in the spirit was the doing, wali; in the doing was the coming of all things, nali; and in nali was the division of all things, tali. These four terms also define the four basic elements of creation, respectively air, earth, fire, and water; air and fire being male, earth and water, female. (1)

1. "yereyereli was originally made up of four elements which enabled it to vibrate secretly," (yereyereli gale gale kono kera ni wale nani ye, o ya to a sera ka yereyereli su a la).

The miri was also "the egg of the world in which nature was enclosed." It is represented by three ovals, all contained within each other; this figure also expresses the three /11/ rotations made by yereyereli at each of the cardinal points (in the following order: north, south, east, west), each rotation stirring up the four elements (2). The central oval, or so de, "son of the house," is the primordial

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2. See Fig. 2, p. 34 . Creation is thus expressed by the numbers seven and 12, obtained by the addition and multiplication of three (male symbol, and number of rotations) and four (female symbol and number of elements). Seven is the symbol of man (homo), and of the principle of the universe; 12 is the symbol of the multiplication of beings and of the perpetual development of this universe.

grain which placed all things in the nature of the four elements. The intermediary oval, dyẽ wali gale, "the first action of the world,"

112 represents fertility; it determines man, the principal thing of the 113 universe, who has also received from it the capacity for thought and knowledge. The external oval, dyẽ ko, "gate of the world," is essentially mobile; rotating upon itself, it dilates or contracts, depending upon the births or deaths of the multiple-formed matter it contains. It is this oval that makes all things in the universe "unable to escape from the sight of the creator" (1).

1. fẽw be dyele ngala ka yeli kono.

112 The essential part of that which the yereyereli stirred up as it 801 rotated was the spirit. The spirit, inflated by all its potential power, 113 finally began to sound. "The spirit resounded in the midst of facts," (2) and as it was the strongest element in space, it held itself up alone

2. miri ye manga ti walew tyela.

and arose. Then it burst and from it poured elements which slowly separated, dispersed, and ordered themselves. It is said of this event: "In the old days, all things came out together" (3). These fundamental

3. folo kow bõñuana.

elements, numbering twenty-two, are at the origin of creation which is classified into twenty-two categories.

The Bambara use several methods to order and name these elements. First, according to the fundamental system of creative thought, yo, they divide the elements into three groups of seven, to which a twenty-second is added.

The first seven, dyẽ dyo kã gale, "the first voice of the building of the world," express yereyereli before knowledge, but containing all things with man, "seed" of nature, in the first place. The seven following elements, dyẽ dyo kã saba "the third voice of the building of the world," denote the beginning of the knowledge of yereyereli as masculinity and assures all fertility. It is at this moment that the term koni appears, attributed to yereyereli, and expressing awe before creation. The last seven, dye dyo ka nani "the fourth voice of the building of the world," contains "the complete revelation of the dispositions and situations /12/ of all that was created";

772 801 773 yereyereli then becomes known as femininity and assures the supremacy of femininity over nature. The twenty-second element sums up these three groups of seven and expresses total knowledge (1).

1. The same progression of numbers as in the creative thought yo, characterizes the creation by vibration. Being 1, the vibration passed on to 2. At 2, it conceived invisible "light air" and the powers it contained were grouped together to form a whole. At 3, the powers became gravity, and the visible "heavy air" appeared. At 4, and only at that moment, creation, completely visible, was revealed to the consciousness. For further discussion of the "heavy air," see also S. de Ganay, Notes sur la théodicée bambara, p. 188.

Another division of the elements determines the categories. The first seven are the bõnuana of which it is said: "The seven bõnuana came out first" (2). Then came twelve bangini, births or bayeremani

2. Bõnuana wolo fla bwora folo. The word bõnuana means literally "come out together."

"discoveries," of which it is said: "Twelve discoveries were left in space" (3). After them, there appeared three ǰiginis, foundations or

3. Bangini tani fla bla ka kẹnẹ da.

dyoli, situations, of which it is said: "Three foundations ate up the world" (4). The first seven elements are the "states of the world";

4. ǰigini saba ye dyẽ dũ.

the next twelve, "the foundations of the world"; the last three, "the words of the world's situation" (5).

5. dyẽ dyo tyoko; dyẽ sigi tyoko; dyẽ dyo ka.

772 801 773 The seven bõnuana summarize the general characteristics of beings and things:

1. keleña, unity;
2. makari, pity, mercy;
3. mako, necessity;
4. sinaya, aggression, jealousy;
5. fadena, rivalry;
6. maloya, shame;
7. sia, race, species, stock.

The twelve bangini, which follow, determine the qualities and destinies of the person:

1. ma ye ma ye, literally: a person is a person; gifts, possibilities of each, propositions and dispositions.
2. mako, mutual aid, simplicity, dignity, courtesy, wisdom.
3. sebaya, power, domination.
4. dyuguya, maliciousness, vulgarity, ferocity, difficulties.
5. kunanguya, bad luck, bad destiny, ill nature.
6. sira, road, guide, obedience, discipline.
7. ɲafola, wealth, health, fertility.
8. adamadeña, brotherhood, humanity, liberty, kindness.
9. dahirime, food, material possessions.
10. saya, death, illness, infirmities, madness.
11. /13/ ɲu, night, light and dark, secret, witchcraft.
12. kle, day, sun; all the boli altars of the Bambara.

The three jijini are respectively:

1. kun, the head that thought out the world.
2. ba, the womb that formed it.
3. fo, the word that created it.

772 773 Knowledge, fã̂, was born of three foundations which finally became detached from the spirit (1). Knowledge opened up, divided, and

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1. The following prayer, relating to the fã̂, is sometimes recited: fango, ma dua, ma bo, fẽ̂ mbina, fẽ̂ nkumba, fẽ̂ ndaba, fẽ̂ semba, wolo tigi ye nye, djiri tigi ye nye, panye bwora na. O bwora mi, o nya nyimi senge do. Ntigi ye yereyere ye, ka bo miri kono, miri dane sandyi.

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"Road of knowledge, I am not small, I am not big. A thing arrives, a thing with a large head, a large mouth, a large foot. I am the master of fertility; I am the master of trees. Where does it come from? It comes from the weariness of my seed. My master is the vibration, out of which came the spirit, the rain of which fertilizes."

772 773 contributed to the building of the visible world, especially engendering particles, moõ moõ, which entered into the composition of the earth, and a radiance, noro, used for the formation of the sky.

At the same time, the spirit let fall upon the earth (still in the process of formation) a heavy object in the form of a globule, kulu, which was later named pemba (1). Pemba, moving as a whirlwind to

1. From fẽ, thing and ba, big.

the four cardinal points (south, west, east, and north), received twelve of the elements issued from the spirit. Then, with the help of the particles that came out of fã, he modeled lumps and mounds which gave shape to the earth.

But in the course of rising, the spirit had thrown upwards that which was later called fãro (2). Faro, who was then no more than vibration,

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2. The Bambara use either faro or fãro, from fa (creation) or fã (knowledge) in the ancient language. This double etymology indicates the closeness in their minds between the concepts of creation and knowledge (see p. 17). The suffix ro expresses the idea of a whole, a totality. Another etymology has been suggested by S. de Ganay, in Notes sur la théodicée bambara, p. 196. "... the words Fané (the name of a family of blacksmiths), Faro, fan (force), fara (stone), and fari (body) all have the same origin. Faro is the secret name of stone." This etymology

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is interesting in that it accentuates the ties which, in the Sudan, bind the Faro of the Bambara and the Bozo, the Nommo of the Dogon, and the blacksmiths. See M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau (passim).

772 helped the spirit with ten of its elements and with the radiance from
773 fã to build the sky along an oriented trajectory. Faro first went to the west, then the south, the east, and the north, thus determining the celestial cardinal points.

/14/ The sky is distinct from empty space, kene, which separates it from the earth and which is the product of the "yereyereli's shedding after it had given birth to the spirit." The sky, composed of seven parts placed one above the other, was completed before the earth which itself is also made up of seven corresponding parts.

773 Although he had received the larger share of the elements disgorged by the spirit, Pemba could not finish his work alone. When the sky was completed, the spirit blessed Faro, precipitated him in the form of water along the trajectory followed by Pemba during his descent. This water fell drop by drop from the seventh part of the sky to the seventh part of the earth into which it streamed to gain knowledge of the earth's foundations. As Faro descended vertically, he left a globule in space which became the spirit of the air, Teliko (1); on earth, he

1. From teli, to go quickly.

deposited a particle which formed the spirit Soba (2). As he dripped

2. Literally: so, house, ba, big.

between the mounds which made up the earth, he saw that the latter was not completed, so he filled the empty pockets with water, thus forming the hidden springs of today.

Then life appeared on earth. Faro, impregnated by the vibration which was potentially masculine and feminine, gave birth to twin daughters on a deserted hillock (3). As soon as they appeared, the

[823] 3. Naked hillocks, walawala, and clearings are the scene of rituals concerning the twins.

address the following: "Seventh heaven, you are large, you are long; your west is red; your east is white; your north is great; your south is black; seventh heaven, you are the king of seats among all seats, you are the great generator of the power of all powers, you are the great discoverer of all secrets, you are the source of all /55/ fortunes, you are the place where the common weal may not be destroyed; source of all things, deliver me from sin" (1).

1. Wolo flã̀ kaba, i ka bo, i ka dyã̀, i kle bi ka ble, i koro ka dye, i baba ka bo, i bani ka fi; wolo flã̀ kaba, siki yoro u la sikiyoro masa, fanga u la fanga ba sindi, gundow be ladyele fara be, nafolo be ladyele boyoro, dyɛ̃̀ wari dũ̀ bali yoro; ko be boyoro, hake tonye.

This prayer is recited by the head of the family during childbirth, a grave illness, or a death. It was also used during rituals of the enthronement of kings or chiefs.

Pemba and Faro, the complementary principles, were both born of the spirit, miri, at the beginning of the universe. In considering the psychological aspects of their symbolic roles, one can understand why, despite the antecedence of Pemba's role, from time to time the Bambara say that "Faro is the eldest." For he represents, in the human microcosm, the will and wisdom capable of controlling the propulsion of sexual instinct as symbolized by the prolificness of the balanza as well as the violence and disorder of the emotions as expressed in Mousso Koroni's vertiginous chthonian voyage and her madness. The antithesis of the sexes, realized in the myth by the bodily separation of Pemba and Mousso Koroni, and their disagreements and quarrels which are the origin of all cosmic disorders, are compensated for by harmonious agreement and union, as established by Faro in his androgynous state. Faro is the dual vibration which, from then on, orders the universe; he is reason and moderation opposed to the overwhelming force of the balanza; he is the light of the spirit which triumphs over darkness and primordial gropings.

776 latter animal which is imitated by the vukuri during the children's
825 nocturnal ritual described on page 65.

This new information confirms the observations noted on page 47, footnote 1, concerning the identity of the Bambara and Dogon representations. Moreover, the warableni, like the yurugu (Vulpes pallida) of the Dogon, intervenes in divination, particularly in geomancy. The investigations permit the extension of these representations to Sudanese tribes coming from Mandé (see p. 2), particularly, to the Bozo and the Peul.

Chapter 3

826 All Sudanese peoples originating in Mandé are characterized by the
773 seeds (or fish) contained in their collarbone, these varying from one
824 tribe to another. On the other hand, within a tribe, the theoretical content of the eight seeds, though roughly similar in terminology, differs in arrangement from family to family. Also the positions of the first and last seeds are reversed for men and women. Example: the blacksmiths have as their first seed the keninge and as their last the tikaninkuru, whereas the potters have as their first seed the tikaninkuru which they cultivate in the sacred fields (see p. 170) and as their last the keninge.

Moreover, after Mousso Koroni had stolen from Pemba the seeds he was entrusted to give on earth, Faro, through the intermediary of the /232/ animals who ate them at his order, reclaimed them from her; thus purified, he distributed them to men. The animal, which brought back to Faro the essential seed of each family, becomes the taboo, tne, of the family concerned, and the breaking of this taboo has the basic effect of removing the content of the culprit's collarbone. Analogous representations are noted among the Dogon.

Totemism, the so called "joking relationship" (senankuya of the Bambara), the caste system, and the exogamous laws of the Sudanese are based on the elements and classification of the contents of the collarbone.

Chapter 6

794 All the great adult institutions (dyo) are in contact with the
857 children's society of the Ndomo which reflects the universal organization
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194 857 772

(space, elements). Each of the six dyo to which men are initiated after their circumcision corresponds to a ritual object in the Ndomo: the Komo (west and air) is represented by the dyara (rhombus); the Kworé (east and water) by the tori; the Nama (south and fire) by the wulu; the Kono (north and earth) by the instrument of the same name. The jineble corresponds to the Nya (nadir) and Nago (zenith). These last two institutions are linked with the whirlwind movement of the creative seed, symbolized by the fonio seed. That is to say, membership in the children's Ndomo society constitutes a pre-initiation to the adult societies which are essentially cosmogonic. The sanctuaries and the sacred fields of the first four dyo are theoretically situated at the corresponding cardinal point. The operation of the societies according to a strict system confirms the observations and hypotheses presented on page 10.

Moreover, the mask of the Ndomo represents both Mousso Koroni and the eight seeds stolen from Pemba. All the ceremonies concerning the coming out of Bambara masks (those of the dyo as well as those of the ciwara and the sogo) recall the theft and cultivation of nourishing seeds by Mousso Koroni and their recapture by the animals on Faro's behalf. Similar representations are observed among the Dogon concerning the yurugu, yasigi, and Nommo.

771 In any case, these are questions which he does not ask or which, at least, he has not considered in any way that would cause him to make logical, even if fragmentary, syntheses. His words and his acts are indications and sometimes even guide-posts for us, but how uncertain and misleading they can be! And, in the observation of current facts, how many at least seeming contradictions there are! However, in the main, the analysis given in the paragraphs above represents the basis of Bambara dogma, since everything happens in reality as if the Bambara were living in accordance with these principles.

761 That being the case, life results from the union of the two parts of the body, while death is a result of their separation. 772 Whence come these two elements and who it is that decides upon their union? No answer is possible. The Bambara say, merely, that certain persons are reincarnations. Precautions [844] taken during pregnancy and delivery show that childbirth is one of those mysteries against which taboos must be observed as a protection. The frequent and readily believed stories about [845] women giving birth to monsters -- usually animals -- bear witness to the affinities which, in the minds of the Bambara, exist between all creatures. But nothing specific is said about what precedes and determines the birth of a child.

562 This is a secret to which the Bambara are, of course, not indifferent. It is evidenced in the fact that women, through 778 whom man comes into the world, are held to be doubtful creatures, at the very least, partly because of menstruation, which makes a woman impure, and partly because of the mysterious travail she endures during the delivery of a child (1).

[774]

1. Women are also susceptible of being possessed continuously by a spirit (see the story of the Déni-bo Ba, p. 123). That is why, when a woman is several times widowed, she is suspected of being possessed by a jealous spirit who kills off her husbands. She is often even thought to be herself a sorceress.

144 771 which encompasses all social, technical and economic activities" (1)

1. G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion], P.U.F., 1951.

of this people. The myths are "a sum of knowledge, wisdom, and not a series of fixed etiological recitations. One may say that they constitute a metaphysic including the knowledge of created things, as well as the principles of their state of being and of their action." (2)

2. Id., ibid.

171 771 Thorough investigation of other Sudanese peoples has revealed that the Bambara religion is part of a pan-Sudanese system in which differences lie in the modes of expression and not in the essence of the thought.

A. Cosmogony

772 The Bambara conceive the world as a mass of active forces which man can influence. Thanks to certain techniques, the pivotal one being the blood sacrifice, man may amass or liberate these forces, may direct and orient them; in short, man may have a hand in the movement of the world and may aid it in its consciousness and accomplishment. This central role of man is explained to us by the order of creation itself, which governs all the rites to which man is subject. The Bambara conceive the world as having issued from an 773 original void which was endowed with movement (3): the gla. This

3. Passim, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].

void emitted a voice which created its double, and from the couple came a humid substance, zo sumale (cold rust), which formed hard shining bodies. After a series of movements and transformations, there was an explosion between the two gla, which caused the ejection of a hard and powerful matter that vibrated as it fell. Out of this vibration came signs which settled on all the things as yet uncreated to designate them. Then, man's consciousness detached itself from the gla and settled on things to awaken their consciousness in naming them. In the

The Soul of an African People
The Bambara
Their Psychic, Ethical, Religious, and Social Life

/12/

Chapter 1

1. Beliefs Concerning the Forces of Nature

181 It would seem child's play to demonstrate to a Negro the absurdity of his prejudices and his superstitious practices; yet such a demonstration does not suceed. No matter how clear and simple your arguments may be, you will not succeed in bringing into his mind the least spark of light or the slightest doubt. The o do, "that's it," and tigné, "that's true," which spring so readily from the mouth of one whose eyes you try to open, are polite sayings, and nothing more.

There is no reason to be surprised. Being incapable of long meditation and broad reasoning, he does not grasp the illogicality of his beliefs and, the contradictions in his behavior; he believes what his fathers believed and, like them, he sacrifices, so that everything with which he comes in contact is reddened slightly with blood. Your talk at once surprises him and leaves him cold; he does not understand you or grasp what you say; he even finds you a little silly. If he does not dare to admit this feeling to himself he stops with the words: Toubabou do! (This is a white man! Can he think and judge as I myself judge?").

In addition, his beliefs are linked to one another, and if we are able to get down to his leve taking care all the while to raise him to ours, if we judge as he judges and think as he thinks, we will move from surprise to surprise, more than ever, for his conception of the world and ours are not at all the same, and his mentality and ours are different from each other.

181 811 772 Every non-Mohammedan Bambara considers himself a close relative of animals and plants and, I may add with all assurance /13/, a close relative of inanimate things. Without any doubt he distinguishes

181 the kingdoms from each other; for him a mineral is not a vegetable
811 nor a vegetable an animal. He differentiates between the animate
772 and the inanimate and does not confuse the genera and species. But has he known how to establish a definite, clear, and well-demarcated line of distinction between man and the rest of creation? No, he bases his ideas of all things on himself or, to be more definite, on what he feels and believes himself to be. In addition to genii and spirits, he sees conscious forces and energies everywhere in nature. He cannot define these forces; his ideas on the subject are confused and indefinite. But, nevertheless, it is true, that he attributes a glimmer of reason and feeling to everything. Obviously the black man does not attribute a soul -- in the sense that we understand it -- to everything; nor does he say that everything is the home of a genie or a spirit; yet he cannot conceive of pure matter. He finds instinct in animals and special virtues and properties in plants. In inert matter he encounters phenomena which he cannot explain, and since he always uses himself and his reasoning as the basis of comparisons, he endows everything with the immaterial, invisible, imperceptible attributes of reason and feeling. In his mind I repeat, matter is not a soul, or a genie as he conceives of one; yet it is a being, a force, a power that has its own existence and the ability to act of its own accord. Here are a few examples taken from a thousand:

811 In July, 1908 at the time when the crops were sprouting, cer-
731 tain regions of the Ségou circle were invaded by tiny caterpillars
782 measuring barely 0.025 meters in length. They were a beautiful
825 velvety black with pale green lines on their sides; they came from the east out of no one knows where and myriads of them proceeded toward the west in serried ranks. Wherever they passed everything was eaten, and the eleusine /African millet/, corn, and sorghum had to be resown.

While these creatures were devouring the crops, the Moslem cried his insignificant formula toward the east and repeated, "God is great." He prostrated himself, crouched on his heels, devoutly shaking his forefinger, but all was in vain, for the quivering black wave continued to draw back on itself, to hump its back, and then to grow longer /14/; it continued to advance and to grow. The pagan

Legend of the Samaké

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My grandfather has often told it to me; he himself got it from his ancestors.... A Samaké -- I cannot tell whether he had been fording the river or driving the stakes to which fishing mats are fastened -- was seized by an alligator which dragged him to the depths of its den. The alligator did not kill him, /21/ for it had fed.... Leaving the unhappy man to his sad thoughts, it withdrew.... It did not go away, however, and from time to time it hit the water with its tail at the entrance of the hole, making it quite clear that there was only one way out and that this was the door. Stretched out in the ooze, the unhappy Samaké moaned: "Who will save me from those terrible claws and those powerful teeth?" An ant lion at the top of the den was watching for flies and ants in the bottom of its pit; it had pity on the man and, working with its two horns, succeeded in bringing in a ray of sunlight to revive the hopes of the Samaké. "Will I be saved?" he asked the ant lion. Two pinches of sand were the answer, and he understood. Working with both hands, he helped the ant lion; the hole grew and he was able to get through. He escaped. When the alligator re-entered its den, exhausted with hunger, it was disappointed not to find its prey there. So as not to invite the curse of their ancestor, the descendants of this Samaké respect and venerate the géré, or ant lion, and it is their tné. Other Samaké have the elephant (sama) for their tné.

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These few legends are sufficient; they all show us that although the Bambara believes that the bond with the tné is simply one of fraternity, friendship, and gratitude and not a bond of real and physical kinship, he nonetheless does not fail to attribute reason and emotion to everything around him, to animals and to plants. In nature he does not find pure matter; rather he attributes human feelings in some degree to everything, and throughout he sees a force, a power, an intangible, which he does not know how to define and which thinks, loves, laments, and weeps.

182 The saraka is the Bambara's only direct religious act toward
776 their Creator and sovereign Lord. Although it is often performed and presented in the corner formed by two paths that fork or cross, it may be given anywhere, and I was right in saying that the Bambara God remains without priest, altar or sacrifice, and, strictly speaking, without worship.

776 3. The Bambara Belief in God is not of Islamic Origin any more
177 than are their Ideas on Heaven, Hell, and the World of Invisible Beings (1)

1. Cf. J. Brun of the White Fathers, "Notes sur les Croyances et les Pratiques religieuses des Malinkés fétishistes /Notes on the Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Malinke Fetishists/," Anthropos, II, pp. 952-954.

772 Bambara notions of God, heaven and hell, and the world of
776 invisible beings conform so closely to the teachings of the Koran,
177 that we ask ourselves first of all if they were not received from the Moslems. Our surprise increases even more when we begin to study these people, for with respect to religion the only terms in which they can express themselves in present-day language are purely and exclusively Arabic. This is a fact, and the similarity is very easy to establish.

The angels -- Bambara méléké, Arabic malaïka مَلَائِكَة -- are spirits -- Bambara hakili, Arabic 'aqal عَقْل --, superior to the genii -- Bambara djiné, Arabic el-djin اَلْجِنّ --, beings intermediate between men and angels and to whom God has entrusted the custody of the elements. The good angels are in paradise -- Bambara ardjana, Arabic El-djanna اَلْجَنَّة -- up there in the blue sky and constitute the heavenly court of the Creator and sovereign Lord of all things, God -- Bambara Alla, Arabic Allah اَللّٰه --, the cause of good and evil. God rules seven heavens and seven terrestrial globes placed one above the other, and the wicked angels

772 -- Bambara sétané, Arabic chéitane شَيْطَان -- are at open war with
776 Him; rooted in evil, powerful, and capable of harming and oppressing
177 human beings. They must nevertheless undergo eternal punishments in hell -- Bambara djahanéma /67/, Arabic djahannam جَهَنَّم -- in a fire compared to which, says the legend, ours would be only the little that would remain after seven consecutive washings with large quantities of water.

As this cursory glance indicates, both concept and words are strictly from the Koran. Can it be doubted that the Negro was taught all this by the Moslem? I have lived too long among the Negroes to take appearance for reality, and here once again I am wary of accepting the statements of our learned "travelers."

177 For centuries now, Islam has penetrated into the heart of Africa
181 and established itself in the midst of our Negro peoples; slow as its advance has been, it has not failed to leave its mark. The Bambara, the most important kernel of the Mande peoples, was always at war against the Moslem to safeguard his independence and the faith of his fathers (the wars were primarily religious). They were in turn conqueror and conquered, but most often conquered (for the Bambara, egoistic, plan their personal and individual interests before that of the group, and they always lacked cohesion and agreement, and never really had a leader at the top); they could not escape. Since they are nevertheless essentially deceitful, crafty, and hypocritical so that other peoples compare them to a piece of cow dung, dry outside but soft and loose inside so that it breaks and soils one as soon as a foot is placed on it -- and this comparison pleases them -- I do not hesitate to say that they took nothing from Islam that was not already in their minds. If they have taken Arabic terms to express themselves, I cannot doubt that this was purely diplomacy on their part. The use of Arabic terms that correspond to their own ideas in order to express their beliefs in present-day language represented adaptation and in no sense acceptance on their part. I would even assert that here they gave evidence, not of tact towards their conqueror (this is a quality which at the present time they do not possess even in an embryonic form), but of a certain pliability and shrewdness. In fact, by appearing before their tyrant on an equal footing with respect to dogma, they

111 The better one knows the Bambara, the more one studies their
177 beliefs in the light of their practices, considering them from their own way of thinking, seeing, feeling, and envisaging things, the more one is convinced that they owe none of their concepts to the Moslems. They have only taken from their conquerors certain words /82/ from the Koran, and these they have adopted to express themselves. They are words which corresponded to their ideas and which, being foreign to their language, remained terms that conceal.

112 It is a curious and surprising fact that certain Moslem truths
177 suited to make an impression on their minds, such as hell, paradise, the judgment of the soul followed by reward or punishment, the end of the world, etc., have always left them cold and indifferent. Had they, perhaps, lost this concept by the time of the Moslems' arrival so that all this was new to him?

112 What does hell matter to the Bambara! Should they fear this consuming fire compared to which ours would be only the remains from a seventh washing (1)? To begin with, they believe in the reincarnation

1. Definition of hell: A douga ko wolonoula, min bi to a wolonoula ko, an tassouma flé nin yé, literally: "it to extinguish washing seventh that which is left to it seventh (washing) after our fire, look, that is it."

of souls, and this belief protects them from all these tortures, and if some Negroes think of hell, they think of it without trembling. To deserve it, one must insult the gnéna or djiné, or the gnâ (boli, sétané), or be a monster to the point of denying all the laws of justice and hospitality. The occasions for sacrificing to the gnéna and to the gnâ are too frequent always to go unnoticed, their fears of the fetishes are too numerous for anyone continuously to refuse the hen and the kola nut to the invisible tyrants. And is there any monster here below whose heart is not at one time or another moved, touched, or seized with compassion for the weak? Where is the rough, rude being who is ashamed to offer a glass of water to the passing traveler or, even

772 more, to a brother, one of his people? It is more difficult for a Bambara to deserve hell than to avoid it; thus they need not think about it and never do think about it.

Paradise hardly absorbs their thoughts more. The thought that they are called upon to contemplate the Creator, to live near Him and rejoice in Him, has not touched them for a long time; they have evolved too far; they have reached the last runs of degradation, and to go lower they would have to be Moslems. Furthermore, the paradise of Mohammed seems absurd to them! That indecent corps of virgins with modest looks and beautiful black eyes, whose color makes them resemble ostrich eggs carefully hidden in the sand (2), leaves them

2. Koran, Chap. XXXVII - v. 47.

indifferent. They still prefer the ones here below, undoubtedly on the principle /83/ that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" /literally: "one good thing that you have is worth 36 that you will have"/. Virginity is too beautiful for the Bambara to have a word [83] for it; it is the flower of a day which a girl of ten no longer has. And what does it matter to them whether a woman is young or somewhat [562] mature, virgin or not, pretty or ugly; to them a woman, a real one, is a good servant, a good cook, and one who provides carnal pleasure at a man's will without ever tiring.

The pleasures and joys of this earth suffice for the Negro; he wishes for no others, and no doubt that is why he believes in a perpetual return. If, when barely in the grave, he already lives again in the womb of a woman, could the idea of judgment after death, the idea of the end of the world and a new judgment, make an impression on his mind? Can he who lives again and again conceive of the end of the world?

773 It is senseless to speak of their knowledge of Adam, father of
829 the human race, and of Eve, his wife. The Bambara meaning of the words Adama (Adam) and Awa (Eve) are quite different from the one we give them. When a missionary, a Moslem, or any European introduces himself to them as the son of Adam and Eve, these words are to them generic terms denoting the first father and the first mother